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COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND COORDINATION
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DRAFT REPORT

Addendum

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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995

1. At its 4th, 5th and 6th meetings, on 4 and 5 June 1996, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1994-1995 (A/51/128 and Add.1). Many delegations emphasized the importance and role of the Committee's functions in programmatic and coordination matters and in this regard fully supported its work.

Conclusions and recommendations

2. The Committee commended the quality of the report and expressed appreciation for its clarity and format of presentation. It considered the report a useful contribution to the improvement of the programme planning and budgetary process. The Committee acknowledged the inherent limits of any purely quantitative approach of programme performance and the margin of error implied in such an exercise. The Committee realized that a systematic exercise of measurement is the only opportunity for systematic control of the effectiveness of implementation of mandated activities to be carried out under a programme budget, and the only tool of control available for some programme managers. It draws much authority from its status as a tool of external control.

3. The Committee expressed concern at the overall low level of implementation, in particular, the sharp decline in the implementation of high priority designated activities from the level in the 1992-1993 biennium. Taking into

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account the information given in paragraphs 15, 16 and 20 of the report, as well as in the addendum to the report, the Committee recognized that the present methodology did not do justice to the departments affected by decisions taken during the biennium by the relevant intergovernmental bodies. Consequently, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to refine the reporting methodology for the next programme performance report, so as to better reflect both the extent to which the activities of the programme of work had actually been mandated throughout the period concerned and, correspondingly, the extent to which they had actually been implemented. The Committee recommended that appropriate measures be taken to ensure that programme managers adhere to the priorities mandated by the General Assembly. In this connection, the Committee stressed the need for continued efforts to improve the rate of implementation of the programme of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). While noting the detrimental effect of continuing high vacancies on the performance of ESCWA, the Committee nevertheless was of the view that this vacancy situation appeared to be chronic and deserved urgent attention. In this context, the Committee regretted that the vacancy rate in the case of ESCWA was much higher than that approved by the General Assembly and requested that immediate action be taken to face problems in that regard that directly affect programme performance.

4. The Committee expressed concern over the relatively large number of instances in which programme managers did not provide adequate reasons for the outputs that were terminated under their respective programmes. In that context, the Committee reiterated that all changes and additions introduced by programme managers in the course of implementation should be submitted to the appropriate intergovernmental bodies for consideration and approval, and stressed the need for the preparation of programme budget implication statements whenever additional activities are mandated by legislative bodies. These statements should indicate whether an activity of equivalent cost could be deleted or postponed in the same programme by the same intergovernmental body or else indicate the additional cost involved. The Committee stressed the need to ensure fully effective implementation of all mandated activities. Notwithstanding the discretion granted to the Secretary-General through rule 105.2 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, the Committee reiterated the central role of the General Assembly in changing or postponing activities and programmes.

5. The Committee noted that a substantial amount of regular budget resources are being used to fund operational activities. It also noted that an increasing proportion of extrabudgetary resources are being used to fund the implementation of activities of a non-operational nature. The Committee felt that a clearer organizational distinction between these two areas of work would provide more transparency in resource utilization and ensure that resources of the regular budget are utilized to address the mandates for which they were appropriated.

6. The Committee expressed concern at the findings of the report on publications and documentation (paras. 32-35). It noted that a number of departments are increasingly involved in the production and dissemination of information material and services. The Committee recommended that this trend be rationalized in order to ensure that information activities are undertaken in

close coordination with the Department of Public Information. This is necessary to ensure a unified policy in the area of public information and, in particular, to avoid duplication of publications and documentation. In this respect, the Committee recommended, without prejudice to existing rules and procedures in this matter, that no policy decision be taken until the report of the Secretary-General on the publications policy of the United Nations (A/C.5/48/10) is considered by the General Assembly, and until the relevant intergovernmental bodies consider it and take appropriate action on it.

7. With regard to paragraph 15 of the report, the Committee noted that more than 80 per cent of the outputs terminated occurred in the Department of Political Affairs, the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the five regional commissions combined.

8. The Committee endorsed the findings and conclusions in section IV of the report and the courses of action prescribed in paragraphs 36, 38, 41, 44 and 45. In that regard, the Committee noted that the report indicated in paragraph 37 that 181 outputs carried over from the 1992-1993 biennium were further postponed to the 1996-1997 biennium. The Committee agreed to recommend to the General Assembly that it consider that issue in the context of its consideration of the programme performance report at its fifty-first session.